

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, July 29, 2013, with the Advisory Planning Board to review the Proposed Pedestrian and Bicyclist Master Plan.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:10 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Emmett V. Jordan, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Jaime Fearer, Community Planner; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Brian Gibbons, Advisory Planning Board Chair; Jeff Lemieux, Matt Johnson, Keith Chernikoff and Maria Silvia Miller, Advisory Planning Board members; George Branyan, former Advisory Planning Board Chair; Laura Kressler, Public Safety Advisory Committee Chair; Justine McDaniel, News Review; Tom Simon, Jim Hancock and Bill Orleans.

Following introductions, Mr. Gibbons advised that the Advisory Planning Board (APB) began the task of establishing recommendations for pedestrian and bicyclist improvements in 2008. He acknowledged the contributions of former APB members George Branyan, Emmett Jordan, Sheldon Goldberg, Joyce Gladstone, Nelson Geleano, Ann Lombardi, Jim Cohen, and Sandra Lange, and former City Planner Amy Hofstra towards the development of the Plan.

Mr. Gibbons and Mr. Johnson presented a PowerPoint presentation on the (APB) Pedestrian and Bicyclist Master Plan (Plan). The presentation detailed the identification and prioritization of issues that present barriers for pedestrians and bicyclists in the City and recommended improvements.

They advised the Plan is intended to be a living document that the APB, City Council, City Planning Staff and residents will continually update as new problems are identified and solutions are recommended.

Mr. Jordan suggested the priorities identified in the Plan be conveyed to the State, County, and Federal Park authorities. Ms. Fearer said that after the plan is adopted by Council, staff will meet with these agencies to review the Plan. Mr. Roberts said that more State transportation funding needs to be directed to pedestrian and bicycle projects instead of vehicle improvement projects.

Mayor Davis said she had received an email from Bob Rand, 109 Northway, who requested bicycle curb cuts on the south side of the Cherrywood Lane traffic circle to allow bicyclists to exit onto the extra wide sidewalk to travel east on Cherrywood Lane. Mr. Simon, 121 Lastner Lane, said he endorsed Mr. Rand's request and added that signage was needed directing bicyclists on the approach to the traffic circle from the eastbound direction.

Mayor Davis and Ms. Mach noted the plan did not include Magnolia Elementary School and Turning Point Academy under the listing of City Schools. Ms. Mach also noted the intersection of Cherrywood Lane and Metro Drive was incorrectly noted in the report as the intersection of Ivy Lane and Greenbelt Metro Drive. Ms. Fearer will make the correction.

Mayor Davis asked if curb extensions (bump out) and raised crosswalks have an impact on bicyclists. Mr. Johnson said slowing vehicular traffic down makes the area safer for both pedestrians and bicyclists. She also asked if intersections with squared off corners versus slip lanes were safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. Mr. Johnson said yes, noting that slip lanes were designed to keep traffic moving.

Mr. Herling expressed safety concerns for bicyclists and pedestrians at the intersection of Greenbelt Road and Kenilworth Avenue and suggested that APB members and staff “walk the walk” to become more aware of the unsafe conditions. He also expressed safety concerns for bicyclists and pedestrians at the intersection of Greenbelt Road and Southway Road and the exit ramp from the northbound Baltimore Washington Parkway onto Greenbelt Road.

Ms. Mach questioned why APB had not recommended a crosswalk for pedestrians on Metro Access Drive. Mr. Branyan explained that Metro Access Drive was only two lanes and pedestrians can cross two lanes relatively safely. He advised the risk for pedestrians increase for roadways with four lanes or more.

Mr. Jordan suggested that Kenilworth Avenue be broken out as a separate area in the Plan. Mayor Davis advised that she had received complaints about the intersection at the end of Walker Drive being unsafe for pedestrians.

Mr. Branyan specifically noted the need for a mid-block pedestrian crossing on Hanover Parkway near the Post Office. He said a HAWK Signal would be the best solution for this crossing area.

Mr. Jordan asked how the priority level had been determined for the specific recommendations. Mr. Gibbons and Mr. Lemieux said each location had been reviewed by APB and priority levels had been determined based on a combination of necessity and feasibility.

There was discussion regarding bike riding on sidewalks. Mr. Johnson advised that bicyclists are not allowed by State law to use sidewalks unless granted permission by the local jurisdiction. He advised that Montgomery County had passed an ordinance allowing bike riders to use sidewalks. Ms. Fearer said she would look into this issue.

Ms. Mach commented on the high costs of some recommended solutions in the report such as a roundabout on Southway by the Baltimore Washington Parkway ramps. Mr. Gibbons agreed and said APB will continue to look for short term less costly solutions. Mayor Davis suggested the report note that some ideas received from citizens, such as elimination of the Baltimore Washington Parkway ramp, are not feasible so that action is not expected on the idea.

Ms. Fearer mentioned that some recommendations are very easy to accomplish, such as painting crosswalks, but other recommendations require more study and possibly reengineering of the area.

In response to a question from Mr. Jordan, Mr. Gibbons, Mr. Chernikoff and Mr. Branyan agreed that the pedestrian crossing on Cherrywood Lane by Giant Food needed improvements and further study was needed. Mr. Branyan said a rapid flashing beacon may make the crossing safer.

There was discussion regarding the need for Education & Enforcement of the Plan for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists. Mr. Branyan mentioned that education backed by enforcement can change behavior.

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Lemieux encouraged Council and Staff to tour the locations identified for improvements.

Council thanked APB for their work on the Plan and requested it be placed on a future agenda for approval. Council also recommended the Plan be referred to City Advisory Committees/Boards as well as community organizations for review and comment.

Informational Items

Ms. Mach mentioned that Council had approved sending a letter to its Congressional Delegation urging the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to recognize cooperatives and condominiums as residential housing. She said that Congressman Israel is preparing to introduce legislation on Wednesday that will provide for cooperative and condominium housing units to be eligible for FEMA relief and was seeking co-sponsors of the bill. Council requested staff contact Congressman Hoyer and request he sign onto Congressman Israel's legislation.

Mayor Davis provided staff information on a Washington Post article regarding financing options available for digital theater projection equipment and also a complaint from Greenbriar regarding landscape and lawn maintenance issues on the medians.

Mayor Davis mentioned the National Night Out activities scheduled for Tuesday, August 6, 2013.

The meeting ended at 10:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*